

NG FOLKS
ING OUR OWN

LLIAM BLAIR.
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LIKE AND UNLIKE.

By M. E. BRADDON,
Author of "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," "WYLLARD'S WEIRD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.—THE RETURN OF PROSPERINE.

These veteran elms in Kensington Garden, whose wind-blown crests were just like Helen's windows were older by more than a year and a half since that first autumn when she had moved into the flat in Wilkie Mansions, and had grown accustomed to married life as understood by Valentine Belfield. She had learned to recognize the fact that she was fond of her, and proud of her, and he had no idea of making any distinction in his own manner of living, or regarding any one of his pleasures or amusements as account of his wife. If his amusements were such as she could share, he was willing that she should share them. He took her to race meetings, and cricket matches, and regattas, when she was well enough to go with him, but if her delicate constitution kept her at home, that fact made no difference in his arrangements. There came a time when she was nervous and low-spirited, unable to go out on an evening, yet feeling the burden of her loneliness almost unbearable; but her husband frankly told her that she could not expect him to sacrifice his evening amusements—his whist club, or his theatres—because she was moping at home.

"What the deuce would be the good if I were to sit upon the other side of the fire and mope with you," he said. "Besides, you have your sister."

"You talk as if Leo were laid on like the plague or the gas," Helen said, irritably; "but her evening engagements as well as her own."

"Uncommonly selfish of her to be gadding just when you want her most," said Valentine. "It is a woman's place to look after her sister at such a time."

Helen sighed and was silent. Those days of silence irritated Valentine, and was a relief to him to run down and get into the mild mugginess of London autumn, to hail a cab, and go to his daily haunts at the West End; but he still derived relief to sally forth in his guncase or hunting gear, on his way to some country house or snug bachelor den, where there were sport and good fellowship, and congenial men.

The fond hopes which had soothed Helen in her solitary evenings were doomed to bitter disappointment. Her baby-son died before he was a week old, and the shock of his death, which came upon her suddenly, brought on a nervous fever.

For more than six weeks Helen was seriously ill, and during some parts of that time her life was in danger. Trained nurses took possession of that small habitation in Wilkie Mansions. Lady Belfield came up to London to watch over her daughter-in-law, and Mr. Baddley showed a great deal of solicitude, though she did not forego her evening engagements, or desert Sandown Park for the first two or three weeks Valentine was so anxious and attentive; but after the illness had lasted a month his attentions relaxed, and he began to regard his wife's condition as chronic. There was a dreary monotony about the sick room which bored him beyond endurance. The nurses in their uniform, the recurrent visits of the doctor, the sports from the sick nurse, forever fluctuating between good and evil—the whole business hung upon Mr. Belfield's spirits like a perpetual nightmare. He was gladder than ever to get away from his home, more eager than ever to accept invitations from his school friends.

All this had happened six months ago. Helen had escaped from doctors and nurses in the shadow of her former self when the first breeze out of the sick room, and went for a drive with Mrs. Baddley, in the little Victoria, which that lady had just necessary to her existence. It was only a jobbed Victoria, as she told her friends, piteously; but it was a very smart carriage, with a smart coachman. Mrs. Baddley's page sat beside him on the box, and the turn-out was altogether respectable.

The necessity for a Victoria, exchangeable in the evening for a brougham, was indispensable, seeing that within the last twelve months Leonora Baddley had become in some ways a public character. She had taken to literature. She wrote for the Society papers. Stories, essays, hunting articles, racing articles, fashion articles—nothing came amiss to her facile and somewhat reckless pen. She wrote with the air of a woman who lived among duchesses, and who fitted every night with Cabinet Ministers. Upon politics, morals, art, sport, finance, she wrote with equal authority, and a supreme audacity that dazzled the average reader.

Nor was literature the grass widow's only occupation. She had burst upon the fashionable world as an amateur actress of distinction and capacity. She gave recitations at charity concerts, she acted in open-air plays. She reminded elderly gentlemen in the drawing-room of Mrs. Honey, Madame Vestris, and Mrs. Nesbitt. It was not to be supposed that she earned any money by these charity performances, and her gowns must have cost her a good deal; but as she was reported to be making a handsome income by literature, this did not matter, and nobody, except Helen, wondered at the elegant way in which Mrs. Baddley contrived to live, or at the open-handed and thoroughly Irish hospitality of those pretty rooms on the right hand of the third-floor landing.

"I can't think how it is that money goes so much further with you than it does with me," Helen said, with a faint sigh, as she looked round her sister's luxurious little drawing-room, with its profusion of tulips and narcissus in the window sills and the fireplace, and its vases of tuber roses and lilies of the valley.

"My dear, you forgot that I am a bread-winner, while you and Valentine are like the lilies of the field in neither toiling nor spinning."

"I wish I could write for the papers, Leo."

"Everybody can't write for the papers, child," Mrs. Baddley answered rather sharply; "there is something in the way of writing wanted, or at least knack. Besides, the papers are not big enough to hold everybody's contributions. I happen to please

"You promised that last year, Val, and you never came to any of my parties. I sat for a whole evening watching the door, and refusing every dance, for fear I should miss you when you came in—and you never appeared."

"It wasn't my fault, I assure you. There was always something to prevent my turning up."

"I think it was my disappointment about you that made me detest parties. I made a vow to myself that I would never go out again without you."

"Ah, that was last year when you were out of health. Now you are well and blooming again, and it will do you good to see a little bit of life. If I were a jealous husband I should be very glad for you to shut yourself up in these rooms, but I'm not jealous, and I know I can trust you."

"Indeed, dearest, you can," she said fondly, with her hands clasped upon his shoulder, "you know that for me you are the only man on earth."

"Well, I believe as much, Helen. You are one of those foolish lovely young women who are not ashamed to admire their own husbands. But really and truly, my pet, it grieves me to see you mope in the very pleasantest time of all her evening invitations if her friends only knew you were willing. You have but to show yourself to be admired and sought after."

"There is one objection, Val," murmured Helen, blushing as she spoke.

"What is that?"

"I have not had a new gown since last summer, and people dress so much nowadays. I should feel myself an old-fashioned dowdy."

"In last year's gown—although it cost five and thirty guineas and was declared by you and Leo to be perfection—quite the gown of the season," cried Valentine mockingly, and then he took out a bloated pocket-book, and from a confusion of tissue paper, Holt's lists and bank notes intermingled, he selected a note which he handed to his wife.

"There, Helen, I was rather luckier than usual at Chester the other day. There's a fifty to sweeten Madame Bouillon. You might order two gowns, I should think, on the strength of it."

"I will," cried Helen gaily, overcome by her husband's generosity. "How good you are, Val."

"I like to see my little wife happy," he said blandly, not deeming it necessary to inform her that he had over a thousand pounds in that bloated pocket book.

He never worried her about his losses, so why should he tell her of his winnings. He left her with a kiss, and was off to his afternoon lounge at Patterall's. He left her happier than she had been since her convalescence.

"Dear fellow," she said to herself, "I know he loves me, although he may sometimes seem neglectful."

It was a lovely afternoon at the beginning of May. The sky was bluer than London skies generally are, the balmy west wind blowing the smoke eastward to darken the dwelling-places of the poor. Aristocratic London was dressed in smiles, suburban Kensington had a verdant and almost rustic air in the bright, glad weather, and Helen's drawing-room was odorous with hot-house flowers.

Lord St. Austell had been sending her flowers two or three times a week since their chance meeting by the railing of the Row. He sent flowers and plover's eggs and premature strawberries as to an invalid. Mrs. Baddley heard of these attentions, and lifted her finely-pencilled eyebrows with a somewhat scornful air.

"He is more foolishly generous than anyone I know," she said. "He is always sending hot-house fruit and flowers to sick chorists girls."

"I hope he does not rank you and me with chorist girls," protested Helen.

"I suppose it is he who supplies you with all those lovely gardenias and lilies of the valley?"

"He and other people, my dear. I have more than one string to my bow."

Helen ran across to her sister's rooms soon after Valentine left her, and exhibited her fifty pound note.

"If you like to take me out with you this afternoon, Leo, I can order a new gown, and then I can go with you to some of your parties."

"Certainly, dear, but one gown won't go very far."

"Oh, I can have some of the old ones touched up—if I have just one new one in the very latest style, with the season's cachet. Even one gown is an effort when one has a limited income. I can never understand how you manage to have so many and from Mrs. Ponsoby, who is ever so much dearer than Madame Bouillon."

"Oh, Mrs. Ponsoby does not charge me as she does other people. I know how to manage her," Leonora answered carelessly.

The new gown was a triumph of art. Helen's was a style of beauty which needed no embellishment from colour. She always looked loveliest in white, and this last achievement was simplicity itself. A white satin gown, plainly cut, with a long train, and with no other trimming than a cascade of ostrich feathers, soft and pure as snowflakes. A cluster of these snow white plumes adorned the bodice, and accentuated the dazzling fairness of the wearer's bust and shoulders.

Mrs. Belfield had been admired last season, but she had not been talked about. This year it suddenly dawned upon that particular section of society—neither the best nor the worst—in which Mrs. Baddley moved, that Mrs. Belfield was the new beauty. Perhaps she would hardly have been so promptly elevated to this social pinnacle if it had not been at the same period discovered that St. Austell was over head and ears in love with her. Nobody had a word to say against the lady as yet, but it was obvious to everyone except to the lady herself, who saw nothing extraordinary in the fact of his lordship's presence. She knew that he was a man about town, and she did not know that the circle in which she and her sister moved, lay for the most part outside that inner sanctum of patrician society to which St. Austell belonged.

She accepted his attentions at first with supreme indifference. He was her sister's admirer. He had been devoted to her sister at Morcomb two years ago, and she had no idea of any change in his sentiments. Leo's flirtations and Leo's admirers were taken for granted by Leo's sister. There was no harm in any such deviations from the beaten track. It was only Leo's way. Perhaps St. Austell was tired of worshipping a divinity who had so many other votaries. Recalling for instance, among the most devoted. He certainly began to neglect the

elder sister, and to concentrate his attentions upon the younger. He would spend five or ten minutes with Mrs. Baddley, and then come across to Mrs. Belfield's drawing-room with a book or a piece of music, or tickets for opera or theatre—tickets which had been sent him by importunate managers, according to his own account.

"I was told last night that people had to wait six weeks to get stalls," Helen said, incredulously, on one occasion when St. Austell brought her three places for a fashionable theatre, "and yet the manager gives tickets."

"Strange, isn't it. The fellow will send me tickets. They like to see me in the stalls. By-the-by, that is just the objection to those tickets. You will have me as an incubus. It would be bad form to accept the places and not show myself. If you and Mrs. Baddley go, will you much mind taking me, or perhaps Mr. Belfield might go with you, and would let me make a third."

"He would be delighted, but I'm afraid there's no chance of his going. He has so many evening engagements."

"Of course. I know his set. Men who always spend their evenings together. And will you and Mrs. Baddley really not mind having me?"

"How could we be so ungrateful?"

"Oh, but I won't come if I am to be asked out of gratitude. That would make me actually an incubus. May I come, Mrs. Belfield? Just tell me, my society won't spoil your evening."

"How can I, when we meet almost every evening?" Helen answered, naively. "If I didn't wish to see you I should never go anywhere, for somehow or other we are always meeting."

"Society is like the last figure of the Lancers," said St. Austell. "You must needs meet the same people over and over again. Meeting and passing on; and the last chord severs one even from one's own partner."

When was the time that Helen began to watch the door for the appearance of Lord St. Austell, as she had once watched for the coming of her husband, only that in this latter case there was no disappointment? When was it that the assembly first began to brighten at his coming; when was it that his voice first began to move her like music? When was it that the day only began in that lazy afternoon hour when etiquette allowed his lordship's visits to the Japanese drawing-room, which daily looked more and more like a tropical bower, beautified by the flowers which he sent every morning, musical with the rare and costly birds which he had chosen for its adornment?

He could never remember how and when her sin began: how it was that she passed from the liberty of perfect innocence to the constraint of conscious guilt; but she awakened one day to the discovery that the husband she once adored had become indifferent and was growing odious to her, and that the man who pursued her with unspoken love was the sole master of her heart and of her fate.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

GREAT SULPHUR MINES.

Thirty Million Tons of Brimstone in one Island.

Sulphur is of two kinds, one of which is of volcanic emanation, the other being closely allied to sedimentary rocks. The latter is found in Sicily, on the southern and central portions of the island. Mount Etna, situated in the East, seems to exert no influence in the formation of brimstone. There are various hypotheses relative to its natural formation. Dr. Philip Swarzenburg attributes it to the emanations of sulphur vapor expelled from metallic matter existing in the earth, consequent upon the fire in the latter, while Professors Hoffman and Bischoff ascribe it to the decomposition of sulphureted hydrogen. Hoffman believes the sulphureted hydrogen must have passed through the fissures of stratified rocks, but Bischoff is of opinion that the sulphureted hydrogen must have been the result of the decomposition of sulphate of lime in the presence of organic matter. The theory of others is that sulphur owes its origin to the combination of lacustrine deposits with vegetable matter, and others again suppose that it is due to the action of the sea upon animal remains. The huge banks of rock salt, often met with in the vicinity of sulphur mines, and which in some places stretch for a distance of several miles, seem to indicate that the sea has worked its way into subsoil. Fish and insects which are frequently found in strata of tripoli, which lie under sulphur beds, induce the belief that lakes existed in Sicily.

Sulphur mines have been operated in Sicily over three hundred years, but until the year 1820 its exportation was confined to narrow limits. At present the number of mines existing in Sicily is about three hundred, nearly two hundred of which, being operated on credit, are, it is understood, destined to an early demise. It is said that there are about 30,000,000 tons of sulphur in Sicily at present, and that the annual production amounts to about 400,000 tons. If this should be true, taking the foregoing as a basis, the supply will become exhausted in about seventy-five years.

Medical Aid.

Neighbor—"How is your husband to-day, Mrs. Jones?"

Mrs. Jones—"He is very ill, indeed."

"Worse than he was?"

"O, yes; the nurse says he is beyond the reach of doctors now."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"What?"

"I'm glad to hear it. Now, if you can only keep him beyond their reach, I think he will get well rapidly."

On the Road to Fame.

Friend (to young physician)—"How are you getting on professionally, doctor?"

Young physician—"Famously. Since I was fortunate enough to be called into the case of old Mr. Trillion, my reputation has rapidly extended; another case like that and my fortune is made."

Friend—"But Mr. Trillion died."

Young physician—"That doesn't matter."

They Were not Friends.

Bagley: I've heard that Soakem is very sick this morning.

Wagley: Polite way of saying he's drunk.

Bagley: No, you honor, he's sober—perfectly.

Wagley: No wonder he feels queer, then.

A Terrible Disease.

O'Toole—"Well, well, Mrs. McCarthy. An' how have been since before the long winter we had, I dunnit?"

Mrs. McCarthy—"Oh, it poorly, sure! The doctor said I had an ulcer on me tonsils and not to go out in the cold, so he did."

What Made It Hot.

He (shortly after marriage)—"It is fearful hot in this room."

She—"I have just been burning a lot of letters I got before I was married. Perhaps that's what makes it so warm."

MAN'S FRIEND AND ALSO HIS ENEMY.

An Account of the More Important Modern High Explosives.

Few would imagine, as they watch the coal quietly glow and consume away in the grate, that there are present all the materials necessary for producing an explosion; yet such is the case, and it has been found that the ignition of coal-dust laden air is a not infrequent source of disastrous explosions in coal mines.

What has occurred with coal may occur with any combustible solid which is finely pulverized and suspended in air, and in this manner the explosions of flour which destroyed several flour mills in Minneapolis in 1878 are accounted for. The explosions of sawdust in the Pullman car shops and at Gledowsky's furniture factory, the explosions of starch in a New York candy factory, of rice in rice mills, and of dust in breweries and spice mills, are among the many examples of the action of a similar cause; but perhaps the most unusual case of this class of explosions was that of finely powdered zinc, which occurred in 1854 at the Bethlehem zinc works.

Two British men-of-war, the *Doterel* and the *Triumph*, have been blown up, owing to the presence on board of a dryer for paints of which benzine formed a part; and the serious explosion in Pawtucket and the more disastrous one in Rochester, arose from naphtha having been permitted to escape into the sewers.

The modern high explosives are bodies which contain within their molecules the elements necessary for ordinary combustion, while at the same time they are more or less endothermic; and the best example, and perhaps the most important, of these is the mercury fulminate. This substance was discovered by Howard in 1800, and was made by dissolving mercury in nitric acid and pouring the solution into alcohol. Its discovery aroused the liveliest interest, and it was immediately tested by firing in a musket, but, though it imparted very little velocity to the projectile, and produced only a slight recoil and report, it burst the barrel of the piece completely open; and hence it was relegated to the position of a chemical curiosity until recalled for use as a priming for percussion caps.

Its adaptation to modern uses began in 1863, when Nobel discovered that by the explosion of a few grains of this substance nitro-glycerine might be detonated, and was extended 1868, when Mr. E. O. Brown discovered that not only could dry gun cotton be detonated by this means, but that if a small initial mass of dry gun cotton was detonated in contact with a mass of wet cotton, the latter would be also detonated, even though it were completely saturated with water.

Baron von Lenk of Austria took up the study of this material in 1833, and his efforts to perfect the methods of manufacture and to moderate the violence of the gun charges were attended with such apparent success that a special battery of 12 pounders was constructed for use with it, and the position of the explosive seemed assured, until 1865, when his magazines blew up spontaneously, and the article was interdicted by the Government.

While the Austrian experiments were going on, Abel, the chemist to the War Department of Great Britain, was also engaged in the study of the properties of this substance, and the same year in which Austria proscribed the article he announced the invention of the process by which its manufacture has since been successfully carried on.

Gun cotton constitutes the best military explosive known, for, while its explosive force vastly exceeds that of gunpowder and approaches that of nitro-glycerine, it is the safest and most stable explosive we possess, since it can be stored and transported wet; and, when in this state, though it may be detonated as described above, it cannot be exploded in any other way. As much as 2,000 pounds of wet compressed gun cotton have been placed in a fierce bonfire, where it has gradually dried, layer by layer, and been consumed without exploding. Besides, gun cotton is the only military explosive which can be detonated with certainty when frozen. In calling it a military explosive I mean, of course, for use in torpedoes and for military mining, and not as a substitute for gunpowder in guns; but it may be, and has been, successfully used as a charge for shells fired from gunpowder guns both in this country and abroad. Shells containing as much as 110 pounds of gun cotton have been repeatedly fired in Germany.

The most prominent rival of gun cotton for military uses and the best explosive for industrial purposes, is nitro-glycerine and the mixtures of which it forms a part. This substance was discovered by Sobrero in 1847, while carrying out a series of experiments under Pelouze. Its liquid form makes it difficult to store and transport, and permits it to find its way into unexpected places, where it constitutes a source of danger. Considerations such as these led Nobel, about 1867, to invent dynamite. The name is now applied to a great variety of nitro-glycerine mixtures, but they all consist of a porous solid absorbent which sucks up the liquid nitro-glycerine by capillarity and holds it in its pores or interstices.

The most important nitro-glycerine mixture is explosive gelatine, also invented by Nobel. This is made by heating nitro-glycerine on a water bath and adding to it from 7 to 10 per cent. of soluble gun cotton.

The largest single charges ever fired were employed in the blowing up of Hallett's Reef and Flood Rock. In the latter, which occurred Oct. 10, 1885, the charge consisted of 240,399 pounds of rack-a-rock, and 48,537 pounds of dynamite No. 1, yet so nicely was this enormous charge calculated for the work it was to do, that beyond breaking down the rock, tossing up an enormous body of water to a height (estimated for the tallest jet) of 160 feet, and generating an earth-wave which was observed as far east as Cambridge, Mass., it produced no visible effect.